

Breaking Down the **BARRIERS**

Alberta Transportation

June 2001

Accessible Taxis at Edmonton International Airport



Laidlaw Transit Ltd. recently was awarded a five-year contract to serve Edmonton International Airport. This means Laidlaw's Yellow, Prestige, Barrel and Checker cabs will now have the exclusive right to line up at the airport terminal.

Laidlaw's commitment includes service to passengers with disabilities. Sid Slach, District Operations Director for Laidlaw, stated the company will have six wheelchair accessible taxi cabs in service.

Laidlaw will provide reserved or pre-booked service to or from the airport terminal with six hours advance notice. With no advanced booking, the wait will not exceed 90 minutes.

"It is stipulated and committed that no fees will be charged in excess of fees charged to people travelling without disabilities," stated Diane Trenn, ground transportation manager for the Edmonton International Airport.

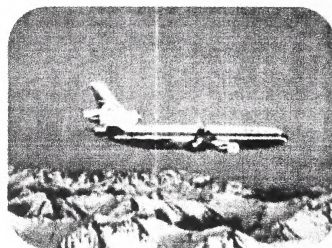
All drivers who serve the airport terminal will take disability training. Currently, one-day courses are being taught by individuals who use manual and electric wheelchairs or who are visually or hearing impaired.

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It is expected to take approximately 18 months to get the majority of drivers trained.

For more information, please contact:

Diane Trenn
Ground Transportation Manager
Edmonton International Airport
Phone: (780) 890-8355
E-mail: Dtrenn@edmontonairports.com



Did You Know?

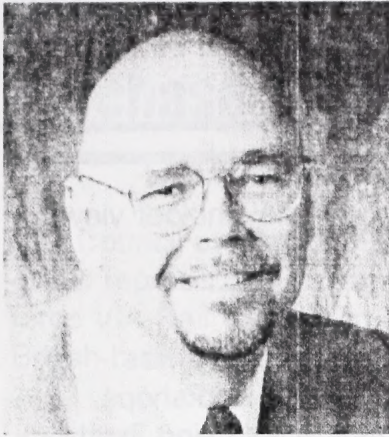
Strathcona Transit recently opened its new transit centre.

The 5,400 square foot building boasts a number of special features, such as a spacious customer-service area, a slip-resistant floor, an air-exchange system that whisks exhaust outside, and a comprehensive security system including 16 cameras and four help phones tied into the dispatch office and glass stairwells. In addition, \$18,000 in funding was used to make the facility wheelchair accessible.

Alberta Transportation funded \$2.9 million of the project while Strathcona County provided the remaining \$1 million.

For more information, please contact:

Lynn Kelly
Manager
Strathcona Transit
Phone: (780) 449-9704
E-mail: kelly@strathcona.ab.ca



Profile – Member of the Advisory Committee on Barrier Free Transportation

Name: Tom Fowler
Occupation: Manager of Community
Relations and Policy Analysis,
Premier's Council on the Status
of Persons with Disabilities

1. How did you become interested in transportation issues?

Within my role as Manager of Community Relations and Policy Analysis, I have had the opportunity to meet with many stakeholders in the disability community. The one issue most commonly expressed across the disability community is accessible transportation. The provision of accessible transportation has significant impact upon the participation of persons with disabilities in the community – this is even more paramount in Aboriginal communities.

2. What is your role on the Barrier Free Committee and why did you become involved?

In response to recommendations within the Premier's Council Action Plan in 1990, the then ministry of Alberta Transportation and Utilities established the Advisory Committee on Barrier Free Transportation. Since its inception, the Premier's Council has maintained its representation on the committee.

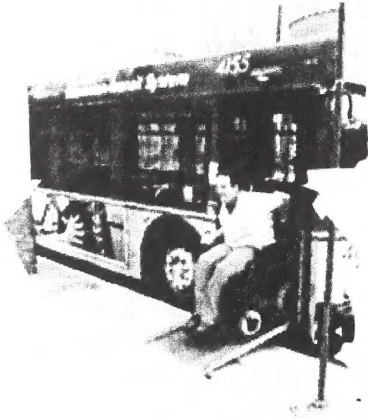
3. What are the major concerns or issues you have related to accessible transportation?

Strategies to improve the status of persons with disabilities must be cognizant of the accessible transportation needs that transcend all sectors of the disability community. Community programs and services often do not take accessible transportation requirements into account.

I look forward to working with the Committee to address these concerns.

New Accessible Transit Instruction Policy for ETS

On May 12, 2001, Edmonton Transit System (ETS) held its third annual Community Conference to gather customer and community stakeholder views on the delivery of transit services.



A new accessible transit instruction policy was discussed at one of the small-group workshops. Currently, passengers with disabilities using fixed-route transit are expected to board and secure themselves without assistance by drivers. The only exception is drivers will engage the kneeling device, if requested. If assistance is required, the passenger must bring along an attendant. DATS registrants can bring one registered attendant free of charge.

Under the proposed policy, drivers will provide assistance in lifting seats and securing passengers only if passengers have requested assistance. If physically unable to assist, drivers may ask another passenger to provide the assistance.



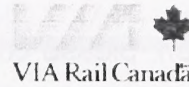
The new policy will apply to drivers of all transit vehicles including community buses, high and low-floor buses, LRT trains, and DATS handi-buses.

As the new policy is still in its development stage, ETS is looking for customer comments. If you would like to provide your input, please forward them to:



Lorna Stewart
Community Relations
Edmonton Transit System
Phone: (780) 496-1090
E-mail: lorna.stewart@gov.edmonton.ab.ca

VIA's Purchase of Rail Cars



The Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD), an umbrella group representing associations for people with disabilities, has been trying to force VIA Rail Canada to cancel its \$125 million contract to purchase 139 British-built rail cars.

CCD stated the new coaches are less accessible than rail cars already in use and it would be very costly to modify to meet federal accessibility guidelines. According to CCD, these cars are much narrower than those in use in Canada. The service car has one single accessible sleeping unit, while coaches and sleepers are totally inaccessible.



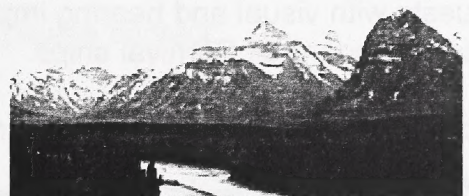
Because certain areas of some of the cars are accessible to people using wheelchairs, Via Rail considers the entire train accessible. CCD believes all three car types must be truly accessible.

The Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA), which had temporarily stopped VIA Rail from proceeding with the deal while it investigated the claims made by CCD, recently ruled the rail cars are indeed inaccessible for persons with disabilities.

VIA Rail has argued the new cars would revitalize Canada's aging rolling stock and were bought for a fraction of what they would cost if built to order.

The trains were originally designed to use the Channel Tunnel between Britain and France. Technical problems, on top of deregulation of the air industry, meant the cars were never put into service.

In April 2001, VIA Rail approached the Federal Court of Appeal to challenge CTA's decision, which called upon VIA Rail to provide CTA with its retrofit plans. One month later, the Federal Court denied VIA



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Rail's motion for leave to appeal the CTA's jurisdiction in the matter and awarded CCD costs related to VIA Rail's appeal.

For more information, please contact:

Pat Danforth

Chairperson of Transportation Committee

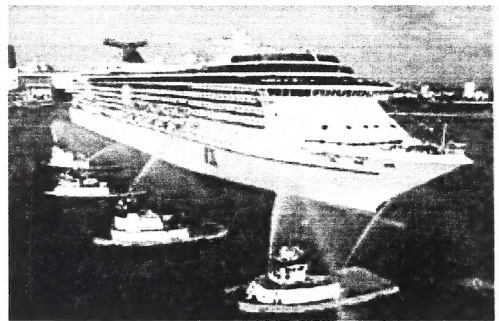
Council of Canadians with Disabilities

Phone: (250) 383-4443

E-mail: ccd@pcs.mb.ca

Carnival Cruise Line Improves Accessibility

The March 2001 edition of **Fairplay** magazine reported Carnival Cruise Line has been improving the accessibility of its large fleet of ships.



The cruise line has been installing wider doorways and furnishings such as hand bars inside the shower stall and next to the toilet. Shower seats also are being fitted, along with water controls at a lower level, a lower peephole in the cabin door, lower telephones and a remote-control device for the television.

Carnival also offers a TTY kit, lighted phone ringers, "door knockers" that flash a light in the room, and "bed shakers", often used by hearing impaired guests as a wake-up call.

It should be noted that the number of such features varies from ship to ship.

Guests with visual and hearing impairments are welcome to bring their guide dogs on board all Carnival ships.

For further information, contact Carnival through its website at: www.carnival.com

Federal Accessible Transportation Initiatives



Transport Canada has provided funding on behalf of the Minister's Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation to develop an action plan, called **Future Directions** for consideration by the Department. In developing the plan, the consultant will be working in consultation with provinces, industry and consumer organizations. The action plan will provide a road map identifying key accessible transportation issues and priorities.

The Department, in conjunction with other partners, is also developing a web "portal" that will offer information on accessible transportation services; support for e-business transactions; an advanced search capability; technical and content support; a travel guide; a discussion board; and links to other sites.

The project is designed to foster the accessible transportation network called for by the **Canada Transportation Act**, and to support the **In Unison** and **Future Directions** policy documents.

A Steering Committee has been created and is working towards developing a functioning prototype by 2002.

Four federal departments (Transport Canada, Canadian Tourism Commission, Canadian Transportation Agency, and the Office for Disability Issues) have committed to financing the first phase of the project.

Transport Canada points to the **Alberta Inter-community Public Transportation Guide** website as a good example of what the proposed web portal would look like. Alberta Transportation will be consulted during the preliminary design and prototype development stages. The Alberta Guide can be found at the following website:

<http://www.trans.gov.ab.ca>

For more information on the federal initiatives, please contact:

Bob Brown

Policy Advisor, Accessible Transportation

Transport Canada

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Disability WebLinks

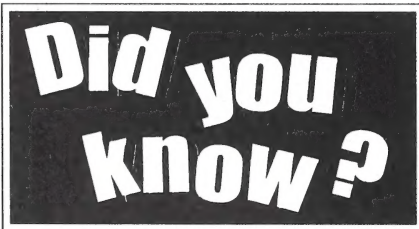


On April 25, 2001, the Honorable Jane Stewart, Minister of Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), announced the launch of Disability WebLinks, an internet site that provides quick access to information on government-related disability programs and services, as well as key contacts.

The website was developed in consultation with persons with disabilities and service providers. Information is categorized under key topics including education, employment, housing, and transportation.

HRDC is managing the website under the direction of the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Social Services.

The website can be found at: www.disabilityweblinks.ca



The Alberta Persons with Development Disabilities (PDD) Board held a business planning workshop on May 8 - 9, 2001 to solicit feedback from stakeholders prior to setting direction for its 2002-2005 Business Plan. Among the issues raised at the workshop was accessible transportation.

For more information, please contact:

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PDD Alberta Provincial Board
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New

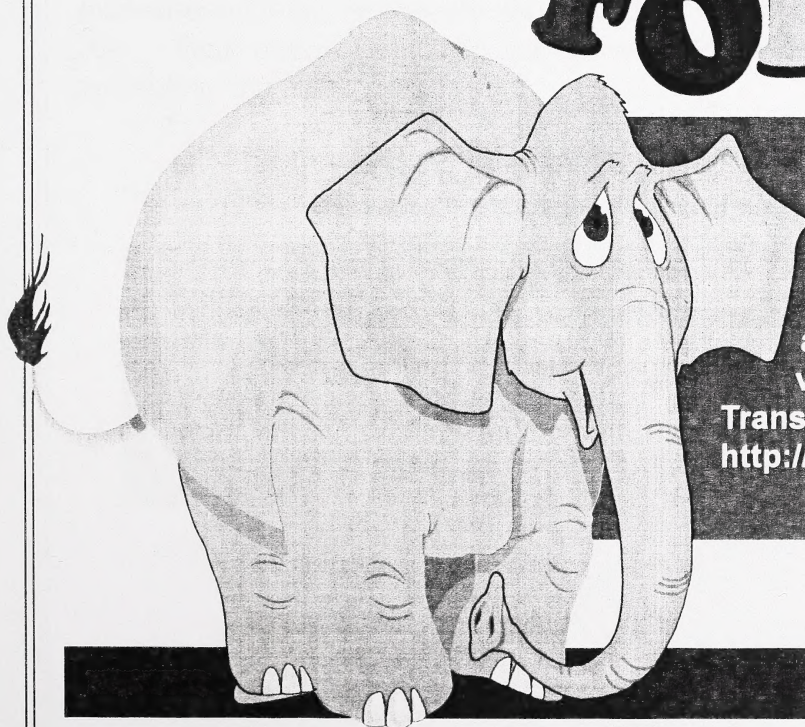
Department Name _____

On March 15, 2001, Premier Ralph Klein announced the creation of a new Alberta Transportation department to focus on the development and maintenance of the province's roads and highways system to meet the needs of the 21st century.



The Alberta Infrastructure department continues to be responsible for government owned and supported infrastructure.

DON'T FORGET



To access key
information on most
inter-community
scheduled bus, rail and
air services in Alberta,
visit Alberta

Transportation's website at
<http://www.trans.gov.ab.ca>

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